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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SIEGEL PRESENTS CREDENTIALS

¶1. Summary: Ambassador Siegel presented his credentials to Governor General Arthur Dion Hanna on November 14 in a ceremony at Government House. Prior to the ceremony, the Ambassador met with Foreign Minister Brent Symonette, who affirmed the government's desire to maintain the best possible relations with the United States. To this end, the Foreign Minister told the Ambassador that The Bahamas had decided to support the U.S. positions on country specific human rights resolutions at the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. He also told the Ambassador that Bahamian accession to the Proliferation Security Initiative had been approved in principle by the government, pending the completion of some legal reviews. End Summary.

¶2. On behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Governor General of The Bahamas accepted the credentials of Ambassador Ned L. Siegel as the 12th U.S. Ambassador to The Bahamas, as well as the letter of recall of former Ambassador John Darrell Rood. In his remarks to the Governor General, the Ambassador highlighted the close and productive bilateral partnership between the two nations and their shared commitment to democracy and the rule of law. He affirmed his desire to strengthen relations and expand our efforts to combat illegal drugs and illegal migration, defend human rights, enhance common efforts against terrorism, and build prosperity and security. The Ambassador specifically noted the U.S. desire to finalize a Proliferation Security Initiative, and work together internationally to counter human rights abuses. Finally, the Ambassador spoke of his desire to deepen commercial and educational ties between the United States and The Bahamas and ensure that the Embassy remains an active civic partner.

¶3. The Governor General conveyed the Government's appreciation to the President for sending an Ambassador of such stature and accomplishment in his previous business and government careers. He noted the "many significant strides" that have been made in combating illegal narcotics and migrant trafficking through Operation Bahamas Turks and Caicos. He specifically thanked the embassy for its assistance provided in the wake of Tropical Storm Noel (both through OPBAT helicopter support for aerial damage assessments of remote areas and in identifying resources needed to facilitate post-storm cleanup). The Governor General then hosted a lunch for the Ambassador attended by the Bahamian Foreign Minister Symonette Chief of the Cabinet Wendell Major, and PLP Shadow Foreign Minister Mitchell, among others.

¶4. Prior to the ceremony, Ambassador Siegel and DCM paid a courtesy call on Bahamian Foreign Minister Brent Symonette and his senior Ministry staff. The Minister emphasized that the relationship with the U.S. was by far the most important relationship for The Bahamas, and one to which his government was deeply committed. Noting that the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly was set to take votes on key human rights

resolutions, the Minister informed the Ambassador that the Bahamas had decided to support U.S. efforts to pass resolutions on the human rights situations in Burma, North Korea, Iran and Belarus. The Ambassador welcomed Bahamian support, noting that when he served as a member of the U.S. delegation to the UNGA the previous year, Bahamian support for Guatemala over Venezuela for the Security Council had been an important contribution.

¶5. Minister Symonette also advised the Ambassador that the Government had recently decided to approve conclusion of a Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) agreement, which the U.S. has been seeking to conclude for over two years. The proposed agreement was in the final review stages, and the Minister said he would be in contact with the Embassy when it was ready to move forward. The Ambassador welcomed this step, which he noted was vital to international non-proliferation efforts -- especially given the Bahamas position as the third largest ship registry country.

¶6. Comment: The Ambassador's presentation of credentials offered an ideal occasion for the Bahamas to register their support on issues on which the Embassy has been lobbying, including the upcoming Third Committee resolutions and the PSI. We expect that this support on key human rights issues in the first year of the new government should lead to consistent Bahamian support on such resolutions throughout the FNM's term in office. The previous government had generally abstained on such resolutions. Likewise, the willingness to conclude a PSI augurs well for continued close cooperation against terrorism. In announcing these steps, the Government clearly wanted to send a strong message of welcome to the desire and to affirm their interest in a close partnership with the U.S.

SIEGEL